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Buffalo Bill and Ned Buntline THE DIME NOVEL TAKES THE STAGE By William S. E. Coleman



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Buffalo Bill and Ned Buntline

THE DIME NOVEL TAKES THE STAGE

By William S. E. Coleman

Sometime during the second week of December, 1872, William F. Cody, the legendary Buffalo Bill, and John Burwell Omohundro, better known as Texas Jack, stepped off a train in Chicago and were greeted by E. Z. C. Judson, known to dime novel readers as Ned Buntline. It was a unique moment. Real men, who were also dime novel heroes, were about to join their creator as fictional characters in a play.

Myth and reality were entangled in that moment. Cody and Omohundro were genuine, if minor, heroes of the Western frontier. Buntline who had met them in 1869 had transformed them into fictional heroes. The first of these, and there were only five, appeared in serial form under the title, "Buffalo Bill, the King of the Border Men," in Street and Smith's "New York Weekly," beginning on December 23, 1869.

Buntline's wild fiction was adapted into a play, under the same title, by Fred G. Maeder, and had enjoyed a successful run at the Bowery Theatre in late 1871 and early 1872, and in a tour to several eastern cities. In fact, Cody had seen J. B. Studley play Buffalo Bill in a February, 1872, visit to New York.

At that performance the audience was thrilled to see their dime novel hero in the stage box. He was called to the stage, and there, he says, "I felt very much embarrassed—never more so in my life—and I knew not what to say. I made a desperate effort, and a few words escaped me, but what they were I could not for the life of me tell, nor could anyone else in the house." (1) If Cody was unaware of what he said, he was also unaware of the uniqueness of that moment when he stepped on the stage. A dime novel hero and a legend became real, at least to one audience.

According to Cody, Freleigh, the manager of the Bowery, "offered me five hundred dollars a week to play . . . Buffalo Bill." (2) Cody rejected the offer and returned to the frontier, resuming scouting duties for the Third Cavalry. Shortly after his return he was awarded the Medal of Honor.

During the summer, Cody says, "Ned Buntline was constantly writing me to come East and go on the stage, offering me large inducements." (3) By winter Buntline's offers became more attractive. In the fall, he was nominated against his will as the Democratic candidate for the Nebraska legislature. He refused to campaign, but he won a close race in a predominantly Republican district. He never took his seat. The birth of the Cody's third child and a bad winter that prevented hunting expeditions and scouting for the Cavalry convinced Cody that he needed to make more money. He

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took his family to St. Louis and, with Texas Jack, boarded the train to Chicago.

Various accounts place their arrival between Tuesday, December 10, and Thursday, December 12. Their opening at Nixon's Amphitheatre was scheduled for Monday, December 16.

That evening Bill and Jack settled into the Sherman House, and Buntline "hurried off to deliver a temperance lecture in one of the public halls." (4) Buntline, as well as being a writer, was a professional temperance lecturer, but one who was not adverse to hoisting a few convivial glasses with friends.

Buntline had been upset to discover that the scouts had not brought along the Indians he had hoped would appear in the play. In the morning the scouts would be even more upset. The next day, Wednesday or Thursday, the novice actors were driven to the theatre. There Cody says,

" . . . I was introduced to Jim Nixon, who said, 'Mr. Buntline, give me your drama, as I am ready to cast your piece, and we have no time to lose, if you are to open Monday, and these men who have never been on the stage will require several rehearsals.' Buntline surprised us all by saying that he had not written the drama yet, but would do so at once. Mr. Nixon said, 'No drama and this is Thursday. Well, I will cancel your date.' But Buntline was not to be balked in this way, and asked Nixon what he would rent his theatre one week for. 'One thousand dollars,' said Nixon. 'It's my theatre,' said Buntline, making out a check for the amount. He rushed to the Hotel, secured the services of several clerks to copy pats, and in four hours had written 'The Scouts of the Prairie.' He handed Texas Jack and I our parts, told us to commit them to memory, and report back the next morning to rehearsal. I looked at Jack's and then my part. Jack looked at me and said, 'Bill, how long will it take you to commit your part?' 'About seven years, if I have good luck.' Buntline said, 'Go to work.' I studied hard, and next morning I recited the lines, cues and all, to Buntline. Buntline said, 'You must not recite cues; they are for you to speak from—the last words of the persons who speak before you.' I said, 'Cues be d—d, I never heard of anything but a billiard cue.' (16)

Later news releases repeat this story, with slight variations, stating, "The play, written on a Friday, was rehearsed on Saturday, Sunday, and Monday morning, and produced on Monday to a \$2,800 house, hundreds being forced away." (6) If this sounds like a tall tale, advertisements and news items in the Chicago papers indicate that Buntline's play had not taken its final form until after Friday, December 13. The ads prior to the Saturday editions announced the appearance of "The real BUFFAL BILL, TEXAS JACK, and TEN SIOUX AND PAWNEE CHIEFS in Ned Buntline's great drama, 'BUFFAL BILL'."

Prior to this there was no mention of Buntline's presence in the cast, or the final title of the play, "The Scouts of the Prairie; or, Red Deviltry as It is." In fact, the advertised title suggests that he had intended to plagiarize Maeder's New York success. Since Buntline was incapable of modesty, it is unlikely he left himself off the cast list, if he had intended to join the scouts on stage.

The "several genuine savages from the plains, greased and painted, with veritable scalps dangling from their belts" (7) never arrived; and they were dropped from any advertising. "The Chicago Tribune," in its notice, notes their absence: "The Pawnees, however, failed to keep their engagement, probably on account of pressing duties . . . a projected horse-stealing expedition,

and in their places there have been substituted a selection of talented supers in tan-colored frocks and cambric pantalettes.”(8) Another writer, probably more accurately, says, the absence of genuine Indians was “due to some railroad quibble.”(9)

The jerry-built play opened to a full house on Monday evening, as scheduled. “The Chicago Evening Journal” reports that “not less than 2,500 boys and young men crowded the amphitheatre to catch a glimpse of their heroes.”(10) The \$2,800 houses seems to be an exaggeration since the price scale was advertised as “Admission, 25 cts. Dress Circle, 50 cts. Reserved seats in the Parquette, 75 cts.” Even so, it was a good house paying the then current theatre prices.

Cody remembers the opening night audience as a gala one, saying “among them General Sheridan and a number of army officers”;(11) but “The Chicago Times” complained about “the pestilential atmosphere redolent of every well-defined stink of a Canal Street boarding stable”(12) and “The Daily Tribune” noted “the presence of 2,200 bad breaths and twice as many unclean feet.”(13)

“The Inter-Ocean” critic noted that most of the audience were readers of the “New York Weekly” and that “never out of an English pit, was there ever anything like it.” It was “not what the ordinary critic would stigmatize as select and cultivated; but it was appreciative, yes, enthusiastic. It was a dime novel audience.”(14)

The production this audience saw was a nineteenth century equivalent of the low budget westerner, the “programmer,” which was so popular in the first half of this century. However, there was an important difference. Even though Buntline’s plot was preposterous, the presence of the scouts and Ned on stage lent an aura of reality to the production. To their unsophisticated audience “The Scouts of the Prairie” was the real thing.

Adding to the air of improbability found in the performance was the presence of a fourth star, Mdle. Giuseppina Morlachi, “that peerless danseuse,” who played an Indian maiden, Dove Eye, who had “an Italian accent” and a weakness for scouts.(15) She had become notorious for introducing the cancan to the United States and her appearance in white tights in the first American musical, “The Black Crook.”

Buntline’s play, now lost, contained enough material for a dozen dime novels according to the Chicago reviewers. “The Inter-Ocean” gives a detailed account of the opening moments of the play, and in doing so, gives us an impression of the rough informality of the evening:

“... The audience sat patiently through a sadly-enacted farce (“The Spectre Bridegroom”) and came at last to the sensation of the evening. They could hardly wait for the fiddlers to stop and the curtain to rise up on the mimic scene. At last, however, ther entered the renowned (and real) Cale Durg (Another of the many pseudonyms Buntline assumed from time to time), the terrible scout, rifle in hand. Storms of applause. Cale had evidently been to the mountains, but never before on the stage. He don’t handle his rifle neatly...; he speaks his first speech not trippingly on the tongue and he uses his arms like a pump handle. But what of that! Durg is the real thing, and the boys fairly yell with admiration as he alludes mysteriously to the redskins that invest his path. Here comes an incident. Just as Durg has clapped the butt of his rifle on the stage with a terrible thump, a half-tipsey fellow from the upper rows tumbles on the stage. Possibly with best intentions, he pulls a bottle of whiskey from his pocket, and presents it to

Buntline. It was perhaps the poor fellow's humble tribute of admiration—his way of throwing a bouquet. There was a moment of breathless suspense, and then the valiant Cale seized the offender by the neck and dashed him into the orchestra, smashing a half-dozen footlights as he went. Cale then addressed the audience as follows: "Let any renegade paleface dare to cross this red line, and he shall thus feel the weight of my strong arm"—a speech which was hailed with rounds of rapturous plaudits. The luckless admirer of the scout was plucked from the inside of a bass fiddle into which he had fallen, and was promptly handed over to a policeman, who dragged him through the audience, wildly protesting, and consigned him to the care of a regular, who led him to the station. The play proceeded. Cale Durg made some more speeches, accompanied with the pump-handle action, and presently Mr. William Cody came to the front, a tall, handsome-looking fellow, but looking, and evidently feeling, ill at ease, and quite at a loss what to do with his hands.(16)

Cody had good reason for feeling awkward. He had forgotten his lines, but Buntline pulled him through his first scene:

"... I could not remember a word. All that saved me was my answer to a question put by Buntline. He asked, 'What detained you?' I told him I had been on a hunt with Milligan. You see Milligan was a prominent Chicago citizen who had been hunting with me a short time before on the plains, and had been chased by Indians, and the papers had been full of his hunt for some time. Buntline say that I was 'up the stump,' ... and he told me to tell him about the hunt. I told the story in a very funny way, and it took like wild-fire with the audience.

"While I was telling the story, Buntline had whispered to the stage manager that when I got through ... to send on the Indians. Presently Buntline sang out, 'The Indians are upon us.' Now this was 'pie' for Jack and I, and we went at them bogus Indians red hot until we killed the last one and the curtain came down amid a most tremendous applause, while the audience went wild. The other actors never got a chance to appear in the first act. Buntline said, 'Go ahead with the second act, it's going splendid.' I think during the entire performance neither Jack nor myself spoke a line of our original parts." (17)

The newspaper reviews indicate that Codys memory is in error. He merely took up most of the first scene. Jack was on stage with him during this opening fiasco, but he was so inconspicuous that the "Inter-Ocean" critic mistook him for the real Milligan!

"The Chicago Times" says what followed was "a sort of triple warfare between the scouts, the Indians, and a part of renegade whites, one of whom manages to keep gloriously drunk, though the impossibility of getting a drop of liquor is abundantly demonstrated." (18)

"But Hah! There's trouble about. A white woman has been seen in the wilderness. And this brings us to the next scene to view a beautiful maiden, armed with a rifle and a dagger, roaming these deserts with evil intents on Indians. Possibly, to the select and cultivated audience it would have seemed strange indeed to see this lovely damsel, whose father had been a friend of the Indians, and who was roaming about with her faithful rifle through the wilderness, suddenly pause in a passionate speech, and marching clear up to the footlights, troll off, in an artistic fashion, a select air from Offenbach. But to the dime novel audience all this was in perfect keeping." (19)

The lovely damsel was named in a later program as a Spanish actress,

"the beautiful and gifted ELKO CORFANO." (20) However, Hazel Eye, as she was called, may have been another actress who was replaced later in the week. If there was a replacement the original actress must have been monumentally inept to be dismissed from this company.

Periodically, Buntline interrupted the action of the play with long speeches in which he "apostrophizes mountains, trees, running streams in a manner extremely poetical and Buntline-ish, but in a manner extremely unlike that of a backwoodsman." (21) He also interspersed these rhapsodies with excerpts from his temperance lectures. By the end of the first act he had been "hurried off to participate in a grand bonfire and barbeque, in which Durg was to be barbequed. Of course he was rescued." (22)

The second act introduced a dual romantic interest, Buffalo Bill for Dove Eye and Texas Jack for Hazel Eye. In the months ahead Jack and Morlacchi fell in love and were married. Once this was established the remainder of the act was "devoted to the killing of Cale Durg . . . he rushing unarmed, in a most inexcusable and uncalled-for manner, into the midst of twenty or more of his mortal enemies. The third act avenges his death, and does it most thoroughly and successfully, in incidents of the performance being the lassoing of an Indian by one of the scouts, the shooting of another Indian by another scout, and the scalping of both." (23)

Cody seemed to find these action sequences easier to perform. In these, he says, "Jack and I were at home. We blazed away at each other with blank cartridges; and when the scene ended in a hand-to-hand encounter—a general knock-down and drag-out—the way Jack and I killed Indians was 'a caution.' We would kill them off in one act, but they would come up again ready for business in the next." (24) "When the going got rough, somebody would say on stage, 'Who'll save me?' Then on I'd rush. 'I will, Buffalo Bill!' Fire off a brace of six shooters. Injins drop all over the stage. Red fire!! Whoop!! Curtain." (25) The red fire is a reference to the "representation of a burning prairie" which had been advertised as a "new scenic effect" which ended the play with a spectacular final tableau.

The critics praised Morlacchi for "her intense acting, fine make-up, brilliant costumes and earnest effort"; but Buntline was savaged. The scouts were forgiven their dramatic transgressions, perhaps because, as one critic puts it, "They are no sham . . . They are the real attraction, not only as heroes of the play, but as celebrities whose fame ante-dates their appearance before the footlights." (26)

As for the play, "The Times" says that "Such a combination of incongruous drama, execrable acting, renowned performers, mixed audience, intolerable stench, scalping, blood and thunder, is not likely to be vouchsafed to a city a second time, even Chicago." (27) "The Tribune" sums up the evening rather nicely:

"... numerous bloody conflicts, wherein persons who, a minute before, were twenty miles away, are telegraphed back, and get there just in time; the beautiful Indian maiden with an Italian accent . . .; the lovely white girl held in captivity by the aborigines; the poetical trapper and his felicitous homilies on the beauty of nature and the superiority of water to rotgut as a beverage; the cambric-clad Pawnees Blue Island avenue; the inexplicable inebriate who manages to keep drunk for several days without a drop of anything; the prairie fire, the fight for life, the vengeance wreaked on the murderous redskins, and the grand tableau at the close—all this put together furnish rare entertainment for the toiling masses who patronize the show." (28)

In spite of the savagery of the critics, "The Inter-Ocean" grumbled as it reported that by Thursday that the "astonishing Indian drama bates no jot of its popularity, the house being crowded nightly with wondering and delighted hearers. It is just the thing to suit the taste of a large class who do not appreciate the efforts of more cultivated performers." (28)

The management tried to expand the scope of the audience with the promise that "Every lady visiting the matinees will be presented with beautiful 'cartes de viste' of Buffalo Bill, Texas Jack, Ned Buntline and Morlacchi." Attendance soared, and Buffalo Bill became a matinee idol and remained one the rest of his life.

The production saved Nixon's Amphitheatre, a rough structure built after the great Chicago fire in 1871. "The Times" ironically observed that "The proprietors . . . no longer pray for a conflagration of sufficient extent to wipe it out of existence." (30)

At the end of the week the Combination moved to St. Louis for a week, then eastward. In Cincinnati the weather was bad for the opening, but "The Dime Novel brigade were out in full force, and they made themselves heard as well as seen." (31) In spite of the blood and thunder of the plot, an Indianapolis critic said it was a clean entertainment and that "One feature of the play is that no double meaning or profane expression is uttered from first to last, and there is not a solitary objectionable feature in it." (32)

By spring the troupe was in Boston. "The Post" noted, "It is not often that real authors, legislators, warriors and pioneers appear upon the dramatic stage and react their own eventful lives for the benefit of less fortunate humanity, and the favor was duly appreciated." (33) He slyly suggested that Jefferson Davis and Garibaldi might earn a living doing the same. Buntline boasted that the dialog was "extemporized each evening, but will be written down at the earliest practicable moment." (34)

"Scouts of the Prairie" opened in New York at the Bowery Theatre to "an overwhelming audience" (35) and scathing reviews. By now Buntline tended to ramble and even ventured rabble rousing speeches urging the extermination of the plains Indians. This must have caused tension in the company because Indians now appeared as extras and Cody was openly defending Indian rights in interviews. The season ended at Port Jervis, New York, on June 16, 1873. While the box office draw had been enormous, Jack and Cody only received \$6000 for their share in the enterprise.

They broke with Buntline and formed their own combination for the next season, engaging the services of Fred G. Maeder as a playwright. He wrote "The Scouts of the Plains." Joining the company was another dime novel hero, and a legend himself, Wild Bill Hickok. Hickok was dismissed in mid-season. Cody says, "I could not do much with him as he was not an easy man to handle, and would insist on shooting the supers in the legs with powder, just to see them jump." (36)

Jack broke with Cody in 1876, and he and Morlacchi toured with their own combination until their retirement in 1883. Cody grew as an actor and engaged superior playwrights to bolster the quality of his performances. After 1876 violence played a smaller part in his plays as he moved towards family entertainments. One of these authors, Col. Prentiss Ingraham, wrote hundreds of the later Buffalo Bill dime novels and served as a publicist with Cody's outdoor exhibition, Buffalo Bill's Wild West.

Cody ended his stage career the season after he premiered his "Wild West" on May 19, 1883, in Omaha, Nebraska. The stage was too narrow for

his broader vision of the Old West. However, the Border dramas he appeared in between 1872 and 1883 were the basis of his career as a showman. They were deeply rooted in the plot devices of the dime novel and, in time, became the basis of the plots of western films. Indeed, they form the basis of our own vision of the Old American West.(37)

Footnotes

1. Cody, William F., *Life and Adventures of Buffalo Bill* (New York, 1927) pp. 246-247.
2. Clipping, *Cleveland Herald*, n.d.
3. *Ibid*.
4. Cody, p. 260.
5. *Cleveland Herald*.
6. n.d. clipping, *The New York Daily Graphic*, spring, 1873; *Cody Scrapbooks*. Buffalo Bill Museum, Cody, Wyo.
7. *The Chicago Times*, Dec. 15, 1872, p. 2.
8. *The Daily Tribune*, Dec. 18, 1872, p. 4.
9. n.d. clipping, *Springfield Massachusetts paper*, spring, 1873; *Cody Scrapbooks*.
10. Dec. 17, 1872, p. 4.
11. *Cleveland Herald*.
12. *Times*, Dec. 18, 1872, p. 3.
13. Dec. 17, 1872, p. 4.
14. Dec. 17, 1872, p. 4.
15. *Tribune*.
16. Cody, p. 264-265.
17. *Cleveland Herald*.
18. *Times*.
19. Dec. 17, 1872, p. 4.
20. Various advertisements.
21. *Times*, Dec. 18, p. 4.
22. *Ibid*.
23. *Ibid*.
24. Cody, p. 265.
25. *Providence clipping*.
26. *The Chicago Evening Journal*, Dec. 17, 1872, p. 4.
27. *Times*.
28. *Tribune*.
29. Dec. 19, 1872, p. 4.
30. *Tribune*.
31. *The Star*, Dec. 31, 1872, p. 1.
32. *Cody Scrapbooks*.
33. March 4, 1873.
34. n.d. clipping, *Springfield, Mass.*
35. April 1, 1873, p. 5.
36. n.d. clipping, *Cody Scrapbooks*.
37. The author would like to thank Drake University for several grants which made this research possible at libraries, museums and collections too numerous to mention. He would also like to note that some of the material in this article appeared in a longer and differing form, under his authorship in "Players Magazine" in the Dec.-Jan. issue, 1972.

The Literary Album Mystery

By Denis R. Rogers

Last known surviving copy: Volume 7, No. 180, dated 29 May 1869

Last advertisement of *The Literary Album*: *New York Weekly*, Vol. XXV, No. 16, dated 3 March 1870

It seems clear that "*The Literary Album*" continued publication beyond the end of May 1869 for probably up to as long as one year, since Street & Smith, the publishers of both periodicals, would hardly have advertised a magazine that they had closed down. Apart from the advertisement mentioned above, four other advertisements of "*The Literary Album*" had appeared in "*The New York Weekly*" subsequent to the end of May 1869 (i.e., on 30 September, 7 October, 14 October and 16 December 1869 : Vol. XXIV Nos. 46, 47 and 48 and Vol. XXV No. 5).

There is also circumstantial evidence, which seems worth placing on record. In Vol. XXIV No. 43 of "*The New York Weekly*," dated 7 September 1869, there is an advertisement headed: *Our Fall Campaign*. That advertisement announces new stories by twenty-one different authors and a check of the serials published in "*The New York Weekly*" during the ensuing year reveals stories by no more than thirteen of those twenty-one authors.

Serials by three of the remaining eight authors were included in the advertisement of new attractions to appear in "*The Literary Album*" that was published in "*The New York Weekly*" (Vol. XXIV Nos. 46, 47 and 48). Those serials were:—

Wilful Estelle; or, *The Wife's Revenge* by Francis S. Smith.

The Land of Dorn; or, *The Mother's Crime* by Margaret Blount.

Leontonamo. A Tale of the Rocky Mountains by Harry Hazelton.

The other five authors were Clara Augusta, Mary Kyle Dallas, Edward S. Ellis, Mrs. Harriet Lewis and Lucy Randall and I suspect that serials from their pens may also have been published in "*The Literary Album*."

Statistical theorizing at this point supports the feasibility of my idea. From the beginning of June 1869 to the end of March 1870 is ten months and a check of Capt. C.G. Mayo's excellent bibliographical listing of "*The Literary Album*" shows that in the ten months to the end of May 1869 ten serials were published in that periodical. In the advertisement of forthcoming *Literary Album* attractions, which appeared in "*The New York Weekly*" in September and October 1869, six stories are named. For the record the three not already mentioned in this article were:—

The Darkened Life; or, *Who was the Murderer?* by William Comstock.

The Disputed Inheritance by Mrs. E. F. Ellett.

Gimlet Holes by John Blackbridge. This title suggests to me that "*Gimlet Holes*" could have been the title for a series of articles.

One further tale is named in the advertisement on 16 December 1869, namely:— *Katherine Grey*; or, *Righted at Last*. A Tale of Mystery and Wrong: Anonymous.

Assuming for this statistical computation that the serials published between the beginning of June 1869 and the end of March 1870 would have been more or less equal in number to the serials published in the preceding ten months, and that the serials by Francis S. Smith, Margaret Blount and Harry Hazelton account for the forthcoming attractions in "*The New York Weekly*" list of new stories on hand ready for publication (advertisement dated 7 Sep-

tember 1869), we are left with tales unaccounted for by five authors. Adding the three tales by William Comstock, Mrs. E. F. Ellett and John Blackbridge, advertised in September and October 1869, the total is eleven stories (or ten if the Blackbridge title covered a series of articles). That is in line with the serials published in "The Literary Album" during the preceding ten months.

The question might be asked whether stories written for "The New York Weekly" would be considered suitable by Street & Smith for "The Literary Album" seeing that, according to Capt. Mayo, the latter publication seems to have been patterned on "Harper's Weekly" whereas, according to Mary Noel (Villains Galore. *They Heyday of the Popular Story Weekly* : Chapter XI : Two Flourishing Upstarts), "The New York Weekly" was patterned on the leading story paper of the time, Robert Bonner's "The New York Ledger."

Evidently the attempt to ape "Harper's Weekly" was not a success for, after starting out with the avowed intention of publishing only stories complete in one issue, serials were introduced from 10 March 1866 (Volume I No. 12). This change of emphasis made "The Literary Album" more like the successful "New York Weekly" and, in all probability, presaged its eventual closure, since Street & Smith did not need two very similar periodicals.

Anyway there is proof that at least one serial written for "The New York Weekly" was eventually published in "The Literary Album." In Vol. XXII No. 25 of "The New York Weekly," dated 9 May 1867, one of the forthcoming stories announced was "The Young Hunter" by Edward S. Ellis. That tale was published eventually as a serial in "The Literary Album" from 10 October to 21 November 1868 (Volume 6 Nos. 147 to 153) under the title: "Adrift in the Wilds; or, The Young Hunters" by Edward S. Ellis.

The unsolved puzzle about "The Literary Album" is the absence of any surviving trace of the final period of its existence of at least ten months and quite possibly longer beyond the end of May 1869, apart from the four advertisements in "The New York Weekly."

It seems strange that Street & Smith, while copyrighting and depositing the weekly issues of "The New York Weekly," ceased doing the same for the issues of "The Literary Album" published from June 1869 onwards. If "The Literary Album" had folded shortly after the end of May 1869, the fact that Street & Smith did not bother with copyrighting the final issues would not have been surprising; with a period of not less than ten months, however, the omission looks very odd.

What is even more puzzling is the total absence of any surviving copies beyond that dated 29 May 1869 (Volume 7 No. 180), which was the last issue deposited at the Library of Congress. One would have expected the Street & Smith archives, now housed at Syracuse University, to have contained a complete run of "The Literary Album," but in fact they have no run at all and, moreover, Professor Randolph Cox, who carried out extensive research at Syracuse, found virtually nothing about "The Literary Album" and its contributors.

According to Quentin Reynolds "The Literary Album" expired as a result of public indifference (*The Fiction Factory*; or, *From Pulp Row to Quality Street. The Story of 100 Years of publishing at Street & Smith* : Random House, New York : c. 1955 : Page 34), but that somewhat superficial history of the firm provides no clues to the date of the last issue.

More strangely, perhaps, neither Mary Noel (Villains Galore) nor Frank Luther Mott (*A History of American Magazines 1865-1885* : Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. : 1957) even mentions Street & Smith's Literary Album.

Finally I think it is worth mentioning that Randy Cox discovered amongst the Street & Smith archives the handwritten manuscripts of two stories by Edward S. Ellis, of which no published versions have come to light. The two stories were:— *The Swamp Outlaws; or Life in the Louisiana Lowlands* by Captain Rodman and *The Wood Phantom. A Thrilling Tale of the Frontier* by Captain R. M. Hawthorne. Captain Rodman and Captain R. M. Hawthorne were both pen names of Edward S. Ellis.

Attached to the manuscript of "*The Swamp Outlaws*" is an anonymous handwritten note, dated 1904, which reads:—

A story of seventy years ago, with scenes along the Mississippi. It is a story of adventure. The villains are outlaws. There is a little love running through the yarn, ending with a marriage. It would hardly be suitable for boys, though the action is brisk enough, and there are some very exciting encounters with Indians. But it is evidently one of Mr. Ellis' attempts to write for adults. The story is fairly well written and might be suitable for an adventure series.

Evidently that note was written by a Street & Smith editor or sub-editor, who resubmitted the manuscript at some time in 1904 with a view to using it in one of many series being churned out by the firm at that time. *Prima facie* the note is evidence that the story had not been published by Street & Smith hitherto, although it is far from strong circumstantial evidence to that effect.

Although the two manuscripts were not dated, it is possible to place them as having been written not later than 1868 or 1869. That is because Edward S. Ellis became a staff writer for Davis & Elverson's "*Saturday Night*" in the latter year and so wrote for Street & Smith rarely thereafter. The fact that the manuscripts were not typed indicates that the stories were written before the invention of the typewriter, as Ellis records using a typewriter from its first commercial availability. Moreover the style of the two tales is unmistakably early Ellis.

Quentin Reynolds states in his history of Street & Smith that the publishing rights in "*The Literary Album*," at that time a defunct paper, had been thrown in with those in "*The New York Weekly*," when Amos J. Williamson sold that periodical to Francis Scott Smith and Francis Shubael Street: he goes on to say that Street & Smith disinterred "*The Literary Album*" and made it a repository for the vast backlog of fiction, which had accumulated in the files. That seems a surprising statement. My impression is that the two young publishers, like the other "flourishing upstarts" referred to by Mary Noel, would have been too insecurely established by 1865 to have built up a vast backlog of fiction.

Indeed I am surprised that such early manuscripts as the two by Ellis remained unpublished by Street & Smith and suspect that they may have appeared in "*The Literary Album*" during the final period of its publication after May 1869.

There is a tenuous strand of circumstantial evidence in favor of that theory so far as "*The Wood Phantom. A Thrilling Tale of the Frontier*" is concerned. That strand is obtained by linking the advertisement of forthcoming attractions (*Our Fall Campaign*) in "*The New York Weekly*" (Vol. XXIV No. 43, dated 7 September 1869) with the title page of *The American Novels* No 46: "*The Hut in the Forest; or, Life in the Western Wilderness*" by the author of "*Cherry Valley*," "*Forest Phantom*," etc.

"*The Forest Phantom*" has not been found and that fact supports, even if somewhat negatively, the theory that that title was a careless reference

to "The Wood Phantom." Against that idea may be set the fact that *The American Novels* No. 46 was issued on 15 October 1868 and the "Our Fall Campaign" advertisement in "The New York Weekly" appeared almost eleven months later. That objection can be countered by pointing out that the "Our Fall Campaign" advertisement refers to serials already on hand ready for publication and to the fact that, although "The Young Hunter" by Edward S. Ellis was advertised as a forthcoming attraction in Vol. XXII No. 21, dated 9 May 1867 of "The New York Weekly," it was not serialized until seventeen months later in "The Literary Album." Incidentally that lapse of time between purchase and publication could be cited in support of Quentin Reynolds' remarks about a vast backlog of unpublished material referred to above.

The fact that the Street & Smith editor in 1904 considered Ellis' handwritten manuscript and not file copies of a "Literary Album" serialization is strong circumstantial evidence that the tale (indeed both handwritten tales) had not been published previously. The possibility of serialization in "The Literary Album" remains until such time as the missing final three months or more of the run are found.

Anyway, in case the issues of "The Literary Album" published during that final mysterious period do come to light, here are brief synopses of the two handwritten manuscript stories, as they could have been published under different titles and/or by-lines.

THE WOOD PHANTOM (THE SPECTRE OF THE WOODS at the top of the first page of the manuscript) tells of the flight of a settler and his family to a frontier blockhouse, when the redskins go on the warpath. The flight is made hazardous by the efforts of a renegade to secure the settler's daughter, but the sagacity of a famous scout and the intervention of the half-crazy title character win the party through to safety in the end. Myra Wentworth is the heroine, Buck Benton is the scout and Tom Johnson is the renegade.

THE SWAMP OUTLAWS is the love story of a Louisiana planter and the daughter of a French aristocrat. In a short prologue, set on the coast of New Jersey, in Monmouth County, the heroine and her father are washed ashore after the ship, in which they are emigrating to New Orleans, is lured onto the rocks by wreckers during a violent storm. Their lives are spared because the girl is recognized by one of the wreckers as his affianced bride, bethrothed by their parents many years earlier. The hero enters the story when, on a journey with his sister by steamer from Cincinnati to New Orleans, he makes the acquaintance of the two French emigrants. After the steamer blows up, whilst taking on wood, the four are pursued by a party of robbers, known as the Swamp Outlaws. They are besieged in a cabin in the woods, but are allowed to depart unmolested, when the robber chief proves to be their saviour on the New Jersey coast. The final section of the romance is set in the Red River area of Louisiana, after the aristocrat has bought a house near that of the hero. Once again the Swamp Outlaws appear on the scene and harass the settlers. The Frenchman organizes a Vigilance Committee and the bandits are extirpated, but only after the heroine has been captured by the villain. The aristocrats are Lucien and Alatia Armaunt, the hero is Emerson Manderville and the villain is Jean Mocquard, alias **Blue Beard**.

The importance of locating these mysterious final issues of "The Literary Album" stems from the fact that Street & Smith used the work of their

"New York Weekly" contributors in "The Literary Album." For example the first serial by Horatio Alger Jr. had appeared in "The New York Weekly" early in 1864 and the next Alger serial was not published in that story paper until 1871. Is it possible that another Alger serial appeared in "The Literary Album" during those lost ten months or more of issues from the end of May 1869 until the final issue?

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A DIME NOVEL COLLECTOR'S BOOK SHELF

THE PULP WESTERN, A Popular History of the Western Fiction Magazine in America, by John A. Dinan. No. 2 I. O. Evans Studies in the Philosophy and Criticism of Literature. Borgo Press, San Bernardino, Calif., P.O. Box 2845, Zip 92406. \$4.95 in stiff paper covers. Excellently illustrated with dime novel and western pulp covers. A good first history of the western pulps. This volume will be used by future writers and researchers as a starting point for their own research. Mr. Dinan shows the roots of the western pulp to be in the dime novel. Recommended.

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LETTERS

Dear Eddie:

A few days ago I received a review copy of DIME NOVEL ROUNDUP—ANNOTATED INDEX 1931-1981, by Michael L. Cook. I'm going to do a commentary on it on my radio show, RALPH GARDNER'S BOOKSHELF, and tell my listeners about it and about those great old Dime Novels and Boys Books.

And to our DNR family I not only recommend it most highly, but feel it belongs in every dime novel library. The book is an invaluable reference tool. How often have I had to look through dozens of back copies to find an item I needed to enhance a book or magazine article I was writing? But it's all here in this book, along with tons of its own nostalgia. Stories by old-time members who helped and encouraged me when I was searching for those rare Alger stories; articles I enjoyed so much in years past that . . . thanks to this book . . . I've pulled out and read again, and I found listings of those great pieces by Ralph Cummings, Frisco Bert Couch, Randy Cox, and many others that either appeared before I became a member, or that I somehow missed the first time around.

I should add that the book is published by Bowling Green University Popular Press, Bowling Green, Ohio 43403. It's a real bargain at \$12.95 for the hardcover copy, and a sensational buy at only \$6.95 for the paperback copy.

As I sometimes (but not too often) say on my show: "It's highly recommended!"

Cordially, Ralph D. Gardner

Dear Eddie:

Your little publication continues to bring pleasure each time it arrives. Enclosed is a check for two more years.

How is the health and well being of our two oldest members, Ralph Cummings and Ralph Smith? Miss their letters and input.

Hope you can persuade Jack Schorr, H. W. Miller, Lou Bodnar, Joe Lewandowski, John Nieminski, Willis Potthoff, W. B. Thorsen, Randolph Cox, to mention a few of the Happy Hours Brotherhood published writers, whose contributions would be a welcome oasis from those dry "term" papers filling so many pages of today's collector's journals.

All best Wishes, Dick Wenstrup

Dear Eddie

Here's an item that I think will be of interest to many DNR members. I'll appreciate it if you'll give it a few lines in the Roundup.

I want to recommend a beautiful miniature book that I just added to my collection. It is titled "The Story of the Horatio Alger Commemorative Postage stamp." The title is self-explanatory. Although it's primarily an Alger item, I think many who collect in other areas will also want it.

This small work of art has just been published by Lillian Herzig Cohen. It is handbound in marbled boards, hand-made and hand-sewn by Ms. Cohen. It measures 2x2 $\frac{3}{4}$ ". It is a limited edition of 150 signed, numbered copies.

The book costs \$10, but those who, when ordering, advise that they are Dime Novel Roundup members and receive a 20% discount.

These miniature books can be ordered directly from Ms. Lillian Herzig Cohen, 34-41 77th St., Jackson Heights, N. Y. 11372.

Best Regards, Ralph Gardner

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